

115 to write down the authorized version of whatever occurrence it was  
194 that I wished to describe. Moreover they warned me not only that  
customs differed slightly from clan to clan and location to location in  
North and Central Kavirondo, but that the Luo who had crossed the  
Gulf and gone to live in South Kavirondo differed in a good many  
ways from the Luo who had remained on the north side of the water.  
It must therefore be understood that the customs which I am about  
to describe are those of a group of Luo clans living in a small area in  
Central Kavirondo, and that there may be discrepancies between my  
account of these customs and those of other observers in other parts  
of the tribal area.

## II. THE MARRIAGE CUSTOMS.

582 In the old days, before the Europeans took over the government  
721 of the Luo country, it seems that a man did not normally marry  
until he was nearer forty than thirty, and girls did not marry  
until they were nineteen or twenty. In the case of a man this delay  
was apparently connected with his duties as a warrior. It was con-  
sidered that a man fought better if he were free from the ties of  
married life. Though the Luo were never a fighting tribe in the  
grand manner like the Maasai they had for some hundreds of years  
been pressing southwards through the surrounding Bantu tribes.  
Raiding for fresh land or even for cattle alone, and the consequent  
reprisals on the part of the raided, played an important part in tribal  
life, and every able-bodied man from the age of seventeen or eighteen  
up to the time of his marriage had to hold himself in constant readi-  
ness for a scrap. The term for a man of fighting age was *wuwer*,  
that for a married man *jalt*, while that for a man who delayed to  
marry until much later than usual was *weswale*. After marriage a  
man seems to have been exempt from all warlike duties and allowed  
to settle down and devote himself entirely to his family life.

582 It is likely that this postponement of marriage to a comparatively  
583 late age was, apart from its connection with the defense of the tribe,  
an instance of the reluctance of the older men to surrender even a  
part of their wealth and power to their sons. A man could not marry  
without his father's permission, for it was only from his father (except  
under special circumstances into which I need not enter here) that  
he could obtain the cattle with which to acquire a bride, and primitive  
fathers are often no more anxious than some civilized ones to part with  
large quantities of their worldly goods for the benefit of their children.  
There was, however, no hard and fast convention as to the age at which  
a man might marry. Circumstances altered cases. A mother, for  
instance, who was without an unmarried daughter, and who wanted  
another woman to help her in the household work and cultivation,  
might insist that her son should bring a wife into the family, even if  
he had not yet reached ordinary marriageable age. Again if there

## MARRIED LIFE

schooling of wives, but modern young women sometimes rebel against this ordered régime, choosing rather to do as they please in their new homes.

Since the introduction of the plough, the part played by men in the cultivation of the fields has greatly increased. Clearing and ploughing are now done by men, but planting and harvesting are still carried on largely by women.

*Women's organizations.* In the past, women's activities were limited in number. Apart from the communal dancing parties in which they took a great pride, there existed among certain related families councils to settle disputes and misconduct among women. This communal organization has tended to become weaker with the growing family individuality introduced by modern conditions.

While Christian influence has increased their freedom by releasing women from tribal prejudice and by widening the horizon of men's views, pagan women are still hampered from taking an active part in modern economic and social activities.

Women's organizations range from small religious groups to registered co-operative societies. The management of the co-operative societies is largely in the hands of Christian women. They are thus more progressive than their pagan neighbours, although the gap is rapidly narrowing owing to the influence exercised by Christian women upon the other women in the community.

*The changing economy.* Before the introduction of a money economy, the garden formed the basis of the economic life of women. Their transactions depended on garden produce which they bartered in exchange for live animals. The more industrious and economical thus acquired considerable wealth, supplementing garden

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